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SUBJECT: Afghanistan's First Female Mayor Could Use a Little Help

Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) Azra Jafari, Afghanistan's first female city mayor, is struggling to put together a functioning administration and win the support and approval of the people of Nili in Dai Kundi province without financial resources or experience in running a city.

Mayor Jafari Lacks Resources  
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¶2. (SBU) Azra Jafari was named mayor of Nili, the capital city of Dai Kundi province, in December 2008. She is the only female mayor in Afghanistan. Jafari has expressed frustration over the difficulty of establishing a viable city administration, given a severe lack of resources and uncertainty over numerous legal and technical aspects of running a municipality. The lack of revenue is further magnified by a \$220,000 USD debt inherited from the provincial government administration. PRT Bamyān is working with UNAMA to explore ways to facilitate funneling additional U.S. and international community resources to Nili to buttress support for Jafari's mayorship. UNAMA actively supports Jafari, but it has very limited resources of its own.

¶3. (SBU) Dai Kundi's dismal provincial capital is little more than a dusty village. There is no PRT in Dai Kundi Province. The UNAMA Central Highlands Office, based in Bamyān, maintains a branch office in Nili, and the two offices are connected by regular UNAMA helicopter flights. Jafari's office, a private home recently re-located for security reasons near the UNAMA Central Highlands' Dai Kundi Branch Office compound, is simply a set of tables and chairs; there are no computers, no filing cabinets, no office equipment or supplies except notebooks and pencils. She has a six-person staff: three salaried employees and three hourly employees. While municipalities are allowed to collect revenues from the local population, Jafari is still struggling to put a collection system in place.

Mayor's Wish List  
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¶4. (SBU) While the master plan has been drawn up, Jafari's office lacks the legal and technical expertise (not to mention the financial wherewithal) to implement it. Long term plans include developing the area (one street) designated for government line ministry offices, at a minimum by paving the street and paving a short length of road where a new bazaar is to be located. In the short-term, she would like to procure a water supply truck (so that people do not have to make multiple daily trips to distant water sources) and road maintenance equipment to keep Nili's battered roads passable. Additional needs include basic office and communications equipment for the mayor's office and an expert to provide technical advice on running a city.

Comment  
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15. (U) Even a limited injection of resources into Nili by the international community would go a long way in gaining local and national support for Jafari's appointment in one of Afghanistan's poorest provinces, and one of a few without a Provincial Reconstruction Team.

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